

Sports

New boss likes her UA girls lacrosse personnel

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By CHRIS GALOSKI

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When one college-style coach exits, the only logical thing to do is to insert another.

That's the reality, at least, that The Upper Arlington girls lacrosse program operates under.

Lynnda McCandlish, after one state championship-winning season, ventured West to head San Diego State University's women's lacrosse team, but UA seems to have found a suitable replacement.

Kim Rocheleau, Ohio Wesleyan University's coach from 2003-07 (42-17 record), steps in for the Golden Bears, who a year ago were 21-2 and won their fourth-ever Division I state title (2002, '04, '05, '08).

"I definitely would like to win another state championship," said Rocheleau, a former lax and field hockey captain at Eastern Connecticut State University. "I think that they have the talent to do that.

"I've coached college for a total of seven years now. I'm teaching these girls the exact things that I taught to the college girls and they're receptive to new information. They learn so quickly."

They also run rather quickly.

"I tried to teach (a defensive scheme) to the college of my college kids and they just weren't fast enough," said Rocheleau, who also served on staffs at ECSU and the College of Wooster. "These kids are way faster.

"They have the capabilities to run a college defense, so we're going to do that. We changed up a couple things on offense, but they're doing really, really well picking that up."

UA's brains should help replace the brawn of 2008 graduate Lindsay Godard. One of the most capable players in the Midwest, the University of Pennsylvania freshman was good for 78 goals, 27 assists and 36 forced turnovers in her final prep season.

Godard also was an All-American and selected the state tournament's most valuable player, as the Bears dispatched of Cincinnati Sycamore 14-8 in the finals and Hudson 10-7 in the semifinals.

"It's a team effort," said Rocheleau, who guided OWU to its first NCAA tournament appearance in 2005, when she was North Coast Athletic Conference coach of the year.

"The way that I coach, it's not based upon any one individual player. I wouldn't really know what I'm missing. I think with the talent that we have here, it's going to replace anything that's no longer here."

In that vein, back for the Bears are senior captains Kelly Mason, a midfielder who'll play at Cornell University, attacker Erin Junk (Miami University) and defender Marissa Henderson (undeclared).

"These girls have already played these positions, which is great," Rocheleau said. "I love it, having a captain in each area of the field."

The captains will be paired with heavy-duty returnees in senior attacker Rosie Knisley, juniors Erin Williams (MF), Megan Knoop (D), Lauren Hanover (MF), goalkeeper Kevyn Harer and sophomore Adrienne Ghidotti (D). Knoop was the state tournament's defensive MVP and Hanover is already a coveted college recruit.

Five freshmen also will join the varsity squad, which is almost unheard of at UA. But whatever services the Bears can assemble, they can use, with the likes of defending D-II champ New Albany, Thomas Worthington and Columbus Academy wandering around Central Ohio.

"Coming back from winning a state championship, everybody is going to be a threat," said Rocheleau, who enjoyed a furlough from coaching in 2008.

"(We) are the team to beat, and when you have that kind of reputation, you have to take every single opponent seriously."

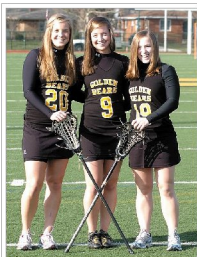
That assignment starts at Our Lady of Good Counsel (Md.) Saturday, March 21. It's just the first of many skirmishes this season for the Bears, and their new skipper couldn't be more eager to experience all that is UA athletics.

"You drive by a town and you see a sign for a kid that's on the baseball team, on the lacrosse team or even a member of the band," Rocheleau said.

"I just always wanted to be a part of something that seemed so close-knit and successful at the same time."

"I definitely would like to win another state championship. I think that they have the talent to do that."

--Kim Rocheleau



SNP photo by Chris Galoski
Upper Arlington's lacrosse captains are (from left): Kelly Mason, Erin Junk and Marissa Henderson.

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